

A BOY AND HIS BIBLE

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Your Boy

Here he is! Just look at him! Is he not fine to see? Who? Why, your boy, my boy! Just think about him a few minutes. He does not readily give up the secrets as to his nature; but we know some things about him very definitely. From eight to sixteen years of age is the period when he is specially hungry for facts. He almost twists himself into an interrogation point. Nothing within the range of his five senses escapes his merciless questioning, and his appetite for facts equals his capacity for pie. Then, too, his memory is very active and retentive. It lays hold on facts easily and does not willingly part with them. Now is the time to fill his memory with forms of beauty, and so enrich his whole life. During the latter part of this period especially he begins to form the ideals which are to shape permanently his life. He dreams dreams and draws great heroic figures on the canvas of his imagination. To-day he is a strong and skilful engineer driving his great panting iron horse; to-morrow he will be an Indian brave with scalping knife, tomahawk, and strong bow with arrows true. In these crowded years he is one bundle of nervous energy. Nothing suits him half so well as activity. His powers of execution seem absolutely unbounded. When old forms of action have been dulled by use, he invents new ones. He must literally "do or die." Seeking continually to give direction to these powers and to bring him completely and forever under its control is sin, dwarfing his intellect, poisoning his affections, mastering his will, searing his conscience. No natural affection, no

blindness, no hopes, no ambition should obscure the fact that this precious boy is a sinner. Now, while he is hungering for facts and storing his memory and forming his ideals and loving every form of activity and inclining to and committing sin, he is fixing his habits in each of these relations. It is simply inconceivable that a boy should pass out of boyhood without having some habits fixed. They will hold him in their grasp as long as he is in this world and unyieldingly cling to him in the world to come. Here, then, is a miniature portrait of your boy. You hope that the magic of years will change him to a great, strong, noble, good, useful man; and you do well. But is he not worthy of careful attention for what he is now, just for the sake of his boyhood?

**The Bible
A Book of Facts**

In our anxiety and hope we turn here and there for help in the redemption of his boyhood. Science, literature, philosophy, language, athletics are drawn upon. But down in our heart of hearts we know that his character and career will be fixed by his relation to just one book—God's Book—the Bible. For a moment consider its relation to the qualities just named. It contains the record of the most important facts which the mind of man has ever contemplated—God, sin, Saviour, salvation, atonement, holiness, service, brotherhood, propagation of the truth, eternity, hell, heaven.

A Memory Book

With what treasure can the memory be stored that is the least comparable to God's thoughts let down to our comprehension in forms of simple narrative or glowing oration or sparkling epigram or perfect story or heroic epic or sweet lyric or longing letter?

The Boy's Own Story Book

Then, too, this old Book is "the boy's own story book." As if to whet his appetite, its first chapters contain the record of strange and wonderful deeds, as the story of creation, with now and then the hint of some great hero, as Nimrod, or of some dark and dreadful deed, as Cain's killing his brother, Abel, or of some overwhelming disaster, as the flood and its hero, riding above the waves, safe in his ark. And then the stories grow longer and more detailed as Abraham comes marching into view with his household. One after another these men pass before the delighted eyes of the eager boy. As they disappear the wonderful narrative leaves its picture before his imagination, and almost unconsciously he tries to be what he has seen. On through the years this stream of revelation flows, ever bringing heroes to view. At last one comes who in His beauty and strength makes all who

A Book of Ideals

went before Him seem small and weak, whose wonderful deeds dwarf the doings of all others, whose words were so sweet and inspiring that men forsook their occupations that they, foot-sore and weary and hungry, might follow Him for days. In His words and works and character the Lord Jesus offers to boys the one perfect ideal of gentleness and beauty, of strength and manliness.

An Action Book

We rightly think of the Bible as a book which teaches us the great principles of life. Yet, with a few very notable exceptions, these principles are there shown in action at work in the lives of men and women. Was the new-born earth to look with honor upon murder, and was it to shield and honor the man whose hands were red with his brother's

blood? Let the story of Cain and Abel answer. Did God forbid stealing and protect an impenitent thief? Let the smoke of the fire which utterly consumed Achan and his household and his goods reply. Does God reward with His favor and honor the man who, through persecution and slander, remains faithful to him? Read the glowing pages which describe the career of Joseph, and no one can again raise the question. The Bible is from Genesis to Revelation a book of principles in action.

A Manual of Habits We all search gladly and diligently into the lives of men to mark the beginning and growth and fruitage of habit. George Washington wrote out early in life certain rules of conduct by which he hoped to govern his whole career. They did have a powerful hold on him. Their influence aided him to repeat good intentions and actions until they became fixed habits. In all the world of thought, can there be formed rules of conduct, fixing habits, that can at all be compared to the Bible? The so-called "Wisdom Literature" of the Bible, like Proverbs and parts of the Epistle of James, contains more than the wisdom of all the wise men of earth, and bears the copyright of heaven upon it. What better can we wish than to have our boys fix their habits in full view of the teachings of the Holy Book?

The One Authority on Sin Books abound on every hand that by their attractive style, excellent illustrations and scientific treatment will draw your boy almost unconsciously into an abiding love of history. He may study art in his Ruskin; or scalp Indians or defend the faith, or march with Lee, under command of Henty; or talk with the beasts as

with bated breath he follows close upon the heels of Kipling or Seton. But there is just one book in all the world that will give your boy an adequate conception of the nature, the guilt, the power, the penalty and the pardon of sin. Here alone can he learn of the fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, and in these pages alone is the message of pardon by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible only can be trusted to give your boy God's view of sin, of the sinner, and of the Saviour. It will show that the disposition and capacity of sin was present in his very constitution when first he drew breath. Why his powers of thought and imagination, his memory and his capacity for and love of activity, his necessity for an ideal and his marvellous ability to form habits have not produced the fruits we might look for can be explained only as we realize that sin is at work and taints all that it touches. There is no such thing as faithful dealing with a boy without dealing with his sin in the light of the Bible. Stories about Jesus are well enough, and a well arranged and connected history of His life is most helpful for any boy. By all means he should be taught to look to Him as the one perfect example of conduct. But we will fail in our highest endeavor unless a boy is brought face to face with Jesus as his Saviour from sin, and is patiently led to confess Him as Lord. Thus only shall we be able to give the best account of our teaching. Obedience to Jesus Christ in all things is the one point to which all effort and prayer must lead.

How to Awaken a
Boy's Interest in the
Bible

The purpose of the
preceding discussion
has been to show that
in the original composition of both Bible and boy there are clearly

marked points of contact. What is the process indicated by nature for bringing the boy to love the Bible? Many plans have been devised. The Bible has been paraphrased for him, and its moving stories have been turned into language of the day. Various games have been invented and widely circulated for catching the boy's attention and awakening his interest. Conundrums, enigmas and puzzles have been put forth by the score. Perhaps all these methods are useful. But the stories of the Bible have been weakened by paraphrase, and games and puzzles soon weary one. Recent elaborate and careful investigation has been made to ascertain some plan which will meet the real demands of the boy's nature, and so will withstand the wear of time and resist the destructive influences of repeated and perhaps unskilled use.

**George E. Dawson's
Investigation and
Conclusions**

Some three years ago George E. Dawson, Ph. D., Professor of Psychology in the Bible Normal College, Hartford, Connecticut, made an elaborate study of "Children's Interest in the Bible," and has embodied the results in a pamphlet with that title. His main conclusions are here given: "1. Children up to eight or nine years are more interested in the portions of the New Testament which give accounts of the birth and childhood of Jesus. They are interested, however, in Old Testament stories relating to the childhood or youth of characters like Moses, Samuel, Joseph, and David. This suggests that children of this age should be given instruction in the Bible from the viewpoint of the childhood of the Bible, beginning with Jesus and using the others for purposes of comparative study." "2. From nine years on to thirteen or fourteen, children are more interested in the Old Testament. This

interest shows itself especially in a fondness for the historical books, the literary and prophetic books, and the heroic and dramatic elements generally. This suggests that the religious curriculum for this period should occupy itself with the history, geography, literature, prophecy and general moral and religious contents of the first division of the Bible. * * * It would really mark the beginning of formal Biblical instruction, the instruction of the earlier period being more general and unsystematic. The order of material would be: (1) History and geography; (2) literature, and (3) prophecy. The moral and religious elements would be involved throughout. Much might profitably be made of the manners and customs, and the social life, especially as reflected in the industries, religious and political ceremonies, and feats of arms. Sacred art might be brought into requisition to aid in the study of characters and customs. This is the period for memorizing selected passages of Scripture, such as Psalms, Proverbs, etc." "3. Children in the adolescent period show a decided interest in the New Testament, especially in the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. They also show a very special interest in Jesus and the principal disciples. * * * This suggests that the material of instruction for adolescence should be derived largely from the New Testament. It would center in Jesus and His teachings, the principal disciples being studied incidentally. * * * Every possible sidelight of history, literature, art and science could be utilized in revealing the ideals of Christian manhood and Christian society." "4. At all ages children feel more interested in persons than in any other elements of the Bible. Even Bible scenes and stories appeal to them mainly through the man, woman or child that is the center of the scene or the

principal actor in the story. This suggests that the Bible should be given to children of all ages through its personal element. Thus the Bible should be given to young children through the Child Jesus. Everything in either the Old or the New Testament that could be properly used to make this human child Jesus intelligible and lovable should be employed." As a result of his investigations, Dr. Dawson concludes that in the Bible "the fifteen most popular scenes" are as follows, in the order of their popularity:

Bible Scenes.

1. Daniel in the Lions' Den.
2. The Crucifixion.
3. The Birth of Jesus.
4. Jesus Blessing Little Children.
5. The Lord's Supper.
6. Feeding the Five Thousand.
7. Jesus Walking on the Sea.
8. The Resurrection.
9. The Finding of Moses.
10. The Raising of Lazarus.
11. The Transfiguration.
12. Jesus Before the Wise Men (in the Temple).
13. Jesus' Triumphal Entry.
14. The Woman at the Well.
15. The Stilling of the Tempest.

The fifteen most popular stories in the order of their popularity he found to be:

Bible Stories.

1. The Selling of Joseph.
2. David and Goliath.
3. Daniel and the Assyrian Kings.
4. Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter.
5. The Story of Ruth.
6. Story of Jesus' Birth.
7. The Prodigal Son.

8. Story of Noah's Ark.
9. The Calling of Samuel.
10. Samson and the Philistines.
11. The Flight Into Egypt.
12. Jonah and the Whale.
13. Story of Esther.
14. Changing Water Into Wine.
15. The Good Samaritan.

Of the Bible characters he found the following to be the most popular in order of preference:

Bible Characters.

1. John, the Disciple.
2. Peter.
3. Jesus.
4. David.
5. Moses.
6. Paul.
7. Joseph.
8. Daniel.
9. Samuel.
10. Ruth.
11. Elijah.
12. Abraham
13. Solomon.
14. John the Baptist.
15. Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

An Application

The experience of
Bible teachers and par-

ents is in substantial accord with these carefully gotten conclusions. We need to remember constantly that all these scenes, stories, and persons should be made to point to the person and work of Jesus Christ. With these results distinctly in view, the following first year's course of study is recommended for our Junior Covenanter Companies. The course should begin with October and end with the following May, containing thirty-five lessons—

one for each week. The characters have been carefully chosen with reference to the great moral lessons each illustrates.

Life of Abraham, by C. A. Scott, five lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Athanasius, by R. C. Reed, one lesson, 10 cents, postpaid.

Life of Joseph, by C. A. Scott, five lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Moses, by Iverach, five lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Joshua, by Croskery, two lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Deborah, by Paterson, one lesson, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Gideon, Paterson, one lesson, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Samson, by Paterson, one lesson, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Samuel, by Paterson, four lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by Salmond, five lessons, 20 cents, postpaid.

This course of study may well be named **The Great Heroes Course**. Its primary purpose is to commend to our boys the heroic virtues which marked the lives of the great Bible characters, and to see how these virtues have worked in men who have lived since the Bible was written. The text-books chosen for the Bible heroes are selected from the Bible Class Primers, which were written for the Free Church, Scotland, Bible classes and Sunday schools. They are of the very highest merit as to the matter which they contain, and are very attractive in style. The booklets concerning the characters outside of the Bible have been written and freely given to our Covenanter work by some of the foremost men in our own Southern Presbyterian Church. The lessons may be used

profitably for the regular weekly meeting of the companies on Sunday afternoon or at some other appointed time.

Daily Bible Reading It is earnestly hoped that these studies may be so used by the Advisory Boards of the companies as to induce all the boys to form regular habits of daily Bible reading and study. Nothing more powerfully contributes to the purity, calm, strength and spirituality of life than the habit of daily Bible study and prayer. (See Covenanter leaflet on A Boy and His Prayers.) Fifteen minutes, or even ten, spent by a boy every day early in the morning in devoutly hearing God speak to him from the lives of His heroic servants as recorded in the Bible, and in humbly speaking back to God in simple boyish prayer will be a mighty safeguard all day long, and will give him power to witness for Jesus in word and deed at every available opportunity.

The Lord Jesus Christ

When the Lord Jesus Christ is included in this course, it is not intended that He shall be put upon the same level as the others. It is our purpose to lead up to Him as the one perfect ideal for all boys everywhere; and more, to lay upon each precious boy His claims to genuine love and supreme obedience as his Saviour and Lord. Let no boy pass through this course who has not been lovingly, earnestly, wisely, and it may be, repeatedly brought face to face with his sin and his Saviour.

Some Hints to Leaders.

Be alive!

Plan for your own study of the lessons. Set your own self on fire. A wet match will not strike.

Plan carefully for Bible study in your Company. Have a regular place and time. Forty minutes should be your utmost limit for actual teaching time.

Begin on the minute, and close on the minute. Don't drag.

Keep careful and accurate record of your work, as time and place of lesson; number present; interest.

Be sure to teach the facts; do not "preach" too much.

A scolding teacher makes unhappy pupils. Every boy present should have something to do or say every time.

Let the boys make an illustrated life of each person studied. It may be done somewhat this way: Suppose you are dealing with Abraham. Get two cheap copies of Genesis. Worn-out Bibles will answer. Cut out all the passages in Genesis that refer to him. Get a good blank book with neat binding, in size about seven by ten inches. Paste the clippings from Genesis in one column on the right side of the left-hand page, leaving a right margin of about one inch. This will leave a wide left margin blank on which to put pictures gotten by the boys from every available source about everything connected with the geography, customs, literature, worship, journeys, etc., of Abraham. On the right-hand page paste clippings from other sources than Genesis, inside or outside the Bible, such as New Testament references, poems, a paragraph from the pastor, etc. Such a book will develop interest, will be a source of proper company pride, and will be really valuable. If every boy in the company could be induced to make his own life, so much the better. Competition will promote interest. Each character should be treated in the same way.

Follow the boys home and tell their parents of your plans, and so work with them.

By all means, freely consult your pastor.

Let there be abundant mental action, movement at every lesson: Only dead boys are still.

Your real power to explain and impress the truth, as well as your hold on the boys, will depend at least upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Therefore, pray. As you plan, pray. Pray while you teach. Over each precious boy, pray. When the lesson is over, pray. Lay hold upon God in prayer; in prayer lay siege to the hearts of the boys. That boy is worth saving for his own sake.



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